



Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar

News Release

Communications Division

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COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR-COLLECTOR HELPS FIGHT TITLE FRAUD IN TEXAS

Travis County residents can use Title Check to protect themselves

Austin, TX – Travis County is assisting the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) to stop title fraud in Texas, and county residents can help by learning how to protect themselves before they buy a used vehicle.

“Everyone who applies for a title in our office will have the vehicle information run through the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System,” said Bruce Elfant the Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector.

This system is similar to how law enforcement agencies consolidated their information into the national crime database. The title database contains title records from DMVs across the nation, and the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) is using it to thwart would-be title washers from getting clean titles on vehicles that should be branded salvage, rebuilt or flooded.

“People who used to find ways to scam the system by putting a clean Texas title on flooded, rebuilt and salvage vehicles may be surprised to find that’s not going to be so easy in the Lone Star State anymore,” Elfant said.

That doesn’t mean you won’t buy one of these vehicles. “The vehicle seller can sign over to you what might look like a good title and later, the TxDMV notifies you that truck, car, motorcycle or motorhome you bought is really salvage, rebuilt or unsafe to drive,” Elfant said. “You can avoid having this happen to you by going to Title Check on www.TxDMV.gov website to connect to the national database.”

Unlike the crime database, which is only available to law enforcement, the national title database is available to consumers. There is a small fee for accessing the title database.

The U.S. Department of Justice is responsible for the title database. The Justice Department partners with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators to oversee the system, which gives you a choice of several private companies from which to purchase a title history report.

“You need a few bucks, credit card and the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to find out if the used vehicle you plan to purchase has any title issues,” Elfant said. “And you can use it on any vehicle from any state so you can go to Title Check for vehicles you might see on Internet auction sites or in classified ads.”

A title history report shows where and what states the vehicle was titled in, previous odometer readings and whether it has a brand that could impact the vehicle’s safety and/or value, such as salvage, junk, rebuilt or flooded.

TxDMV Executive Director Whitney Brewster noted licensed businesses that specialize in selling salvage and rebuilt vehicles tell consumers the condition of the vehicle up front. Title fraud happens when a dishonest seller preys on innocent buyers, convincing them to buy vehicles without disclosing the title issues.

“Don’t let it happen to you or any of your family or friends,” Elfant said. “Especially not when a click of the mouse can take you to Title Check on the TxDMV website.”

If you don’t remember anything else when buying a used vehicle, please remember this: Don’t Buy a Wreck. Do a Title Check.

For more information:

Title Check, www.TxDMV.gov

Title Check video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe5zLz_DKc

National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, www.vehiclehistory.gov